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DEFICIENT, CONGESTED ROADWAYS COST AVERAGE LAS CRUCES DRIVER \$1,005 ANNUALLY IN HIGHER VEHICLE OPERATING COSTS, TRAFFIC CRASHES AND CONGESTION-RELATED DELAYS, A TOTAL OF \$2.3 BILLION STATEWIDE. COSTS WILL RISE AND TRANSPORTATION WOES WILL WORSEN WITHOUT INCREASED FUNDING.

Eds.: The report includes regional pavement condition, congestion levels, highway safety data, and cost breakdowns for the Albuquerque, Las Cruces and Santa Fe urban areas. Info-graphics for each area can be downloaded [here](#).

Las Cruces, NM – Roads and bridges that are deteriorated, congested or lack desirable safety features cost the average Las Cruces motorist \$1,005 due to higher vehicle operating costs, traffic crashes and congestion-related delays, according to a new report released today by [TRIP](#), a Washington, DC based national nonprofit transportation research organization. These high costs come at a time when the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) estimates it faces a \$1.3 billion shortfall for needed transportation projects that would improve road and bridge conditions, ease congestion, improve safety and enhance economic development. Increased investment in transportation improvements at the local, state and federal levels could improve road, bridge and transit conditions, boost safety, relieve traffic congestion and support long-term economic growth in New Mexico.

The TRIP report, “[New Mexico Transportation by the Numbers: Meeting the State’s Need for Safe, Smooth and Efficient Mobility](#),” finds that throughout New Mexico, 25 percent of major roads are in poor condition and six percent of New Mexico’s bridges are structurally deficient, with the share of state-maintained bridges in poor condition likely to more than double over the next decade at current funding levels. Eight percent of bridges in the Las Cruces area are rated structurally deficient. The number of traffic fatalities in New Mexico increased by one third in 2016, increasing from 298 fatalities in 2015 to 398 in 2016. New Mexico’s major urban roads are becoming increasingly congested, with vehicle travel in the state increasing 16 percent since 2000 and projected to increase by another 20 percent by 2030.

Driving on deficient roads costs New Mexico drivers \$2.3 billion per year in the form of extra vehicle operating costs (VOC) as a result of driving on roads in need of repair, lost time and fuel due to congestion-related delays, and the costs of traffic crashes in which roadway features likely were a contributing factor. The TRIP report calculates the cost to motorists of insufficient roads in the Albuquerque, Las Cruces and Santa Fe urban areas. A breakdown of the costs per motorist in each area along with a statewide total is below.

Location	VOC	Congestion	Safety	TOTAL
Albuquerque	\$703	\$886	\$233	\$1,822
Las Cruces	\$582	\$220	\$203	\$1,005
Santa Fe	\$551	\$437	\$246	\$1,234
New Mexico	\$840 Million	\$745 Million	\$705 Million	\$2.3 Billion

The TRIP report finds that 25 percent of major roads in New Mexico are in poor condition, while 34 percent of Albuquerque’s major roads are in poor condition, 26 percent of major roads in the Las Cruces area are in poor condition, and 20 percent of Santa Fe’s major roads are in poor condition. Driving on deteriorated roads costs New Mexico drivers an additional \$840 million each year in extra vehicle operating costs, including accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs, and increased fuel consumption and tire wear.

Road, highway and bridge conditions in New Mexico are likely to worsen unless additional funding is provided. NMDOT’s 2017 budget provides only 54 percent of the annual funding required for road and highway maintenance and preservation and 50 percent of the annual funding needed for bridge maintenance, reconstruction and replacement. NMDOT has identified approximately \$1.5 billion in needed transportation projects throughout the state that would improve road and bridge conditions, ease congestion and enhance economic development. However, at this time, only \$200 million is available for these projects, leaving a shortfall of approximately \$1.3 billion. The TRIP report includes a list of the unfunded projects.

On average, 351 people were killed annually in New Mexico traffic crashes from 2012 to 2016, a total of 1,757 fatalities over the five year period. From 2013 to 2015, the average number of traffic fatalities in the Las Cruces area was 17. Where appropriate, highway improvements can reduce traffic fatalities and crashes while improving traffic flow to help relieve congestion. Such improvements include removing or shielding obstacles; adding or improving medians; improved lighting; adding rumble strips, wider lanes, wider and paved shoulders; upgrading roads from two lanes to four lanes; and better road markings and traffic signals.

Traffic congestion in New Mexico is worsening, costing the state’s drivers \$745 million annually in lost time and wasted fuel. The average Las Cruces driver loses eight hours each year stuck in traffic congestion, at an annual cost of \$220 per driver in lost time and wasted fuel.

The efficiency and condition of New Mexico’s transportation system, particularly its highways, is critical to the health of the state’s economy. Annually, \$109 billion in goods are shipped to and from sites in New Mexico, mostly by truck. Seventy-three percent of the goods shipped annually to and from sites in New Mexico are carried by trucks and another 13 percent are carried by courier services or multiple mode deliveries, which include trucking.

“Conditions will worsen and additional projects will be delayed if greater funding is not made available at the state and local levels,” said Will Wilkins, TRIP’s executive director. “Without adequate investment, New Mexico’s roads and bridges will become increasingly deteriorated, inefficient and unsafe, hampering economic growth and quality of life.”